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PARODY

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME.

COMEDY
By John Palmer

SATIRE
By Gilbert Cannan

HISTORY
By R. H. Gretton

CRITICISM
By P. P. Howe

THE ESSAY
By Orlo Williams

THE EPIC
By Lascelles Abercrombie

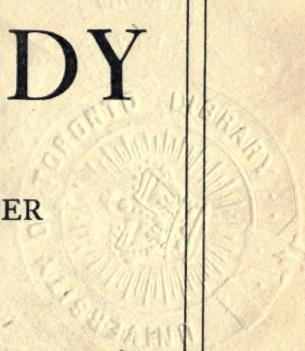
THE BALLAD
By Frank Sidgwick

THE ART AND CRAFT OF LETTERS

PARODY

BY

CHRISTOPHER STONE



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IN the sphere of Letters parody is the quizzical art, the art of the man with the eyeglass, quick to seize the mannerisms of his betters and to raise a laugh by a piece of outrageous fooling, or by a whiff of gentle malice. It is an art which has survived the clumsy handling of the novices, which has developed in subtlety with the development of literature itself, and which has never perhaps had so just a claim to the title of an art as at the present moment, when even genius is obliged to be brilliant in order to get a hearing. The restlessness, the inventiveness, the nervous energy of the age are accompanied by a high standard of cleverness, a reactionary tendency to ridicule everything that is new, and a consequent outbreak of blatancy on the one hand, and of fastidiousness on the other, so that you get a Kipling or a Masefield bellowing in the arena and attracting the darts of such ban-

derilleros as Max Beerbohm and Sir Owen Seaman. In the theatres the old Burnand burlesques have given place to the Potted Plays of the Follies; in politics a *Punch* has more power than a *Pall Mall Gazette*, while it is only necessary for a Unionist to raise his head above the surface of affairs in order that he should be promptly ducked again by F.C.G. And, above all, there is now an ever-increasing audience that appreciates a shrewd hit and prefers a rapier to a bludgeon.

Ridicule is society's most effective means of curing inelasticity. It explodes the pompous, corrects the well-meaning eccentric, cools the fanatical, and prevents the incompetent from achieving success. Truth will prevail over it, falsehood will cower under it: and it is well known that when reason, indignation, entreaty, and menace fail, ridicule will often cause a Government to abandon a Bill, a lover his mistress, a younger brother his sartorial indiscretions.

There was a little girl who, to her parents'

dismay, developed an abominable trick of hunching her shoulders and thrusting her chin forward—a trick as incessant and as irritating as a twitch of the face; and her mother would say, "Darling, *do* try not to poke your head forward like that"; and then she would say, "Darling, keep your head still," rather sharply; and in the end she would say, "Petronilla, if you do that again I shall send you to bed. Now mind—I mean it." And all this only led to tears and vexation of spirit. But it was her father who cured her. He bought a number of those china milk-maids, geese, ghouls, and mandarins which when agitated nod their heads aggressively and tirelessly, and he arranged them on a shelf which he suspended from the schoolroom ceiling, so that whenever at her lessons (the worst time of all) Petronilla began to thrust her chin forward, all her governess had to do was without comment to set the shelf swinging and the row of china absurdities burlesquing Petronilla. In a week she was cured.

Parody

In literature, as in life, it is possible to ridicule a man without imitating his walk, his intonation, his appearance. But the burlesque imitation is the readiest method, and the most effective ; a method by which the salient features of form and matter may be satirised without comment ; the method of " Sister Mary walks like this," rather than that of " Where did you get that hat ? " Nor is it merely imitation that is needed : the sedulous ape flatters, not criticises. Accentuation of peculiarities is of the essence of parody ; and merely to use the peculiarities of an author, as for instance his favourite metre, or his punctuation, or his epithets, without laying any stress upon them, is like borrowing a man's umbrella " for a joke." This restriction applies to such so-called parodies as Gilfillan's of *Blue Bonnets over the Border*, or to verses written in the metre of FitzGerald's Omar Khayyam and appearing to claim honours of parody by a lavish use of capitals. It would indeed be a pity to begin an enquiry of this nature by shutting the door upon anyone, and

if we must have a definition to set limits to the scope of it, let it be some such comprehensive definition as that of a writer in the *Quarterly Review* for July, 1895, who said that a parody was "a composition either in verse or prose, modelled more or less closely upon an original work, or class of original works, but turning the serious sense of such original or originals into ridicule by its method of treatment." This will cover almost every instance in which one writer has "made fun" of another; and will even justify the anthology-makers for including among the parodies *Peter Bell the Third* (a poem which is nearer satire than burlesque, and in which Shelley merely stole Wordsworth's cloak to smother him withal), and those scholarly imitations of Chaucer (such as Professor Ker's *Prais of Oxinfurde* and Professor Skeat's *A Clerk ther was of Cauntebrigge also*), or of the classics, which delight the reader more by their own cleverness than by any mockery of the originals. It should also be stated clearly that for the purposes of this enquiry into the technique of

parody, no attempt will be made to distinguish between the words parody, burlesque, skit, imitation and travesty. Each has its shade of meaning to differentiate it; but no useful purpose would be served by a meticulous classification of each poem under these headings.

On the face of the matter you would suppose that the parodist was a kind of Joey the Clown, standing in the doorway with a red-hot poker in his hand ready to touch up every passer-by. You would suppose that his "fun" was removed from the sphere of morality or reality, and that his victims would skip to the audience's delight or ennui relatively to the dexterity of Joey and the awkwardness of the person warmed up. Yet it is curious to find that nearly every writer on parody and quite a large number of parodists specifically declare that the parodist must love or admire or revere or respect his original. Admiration and laughter—"the very essence of the act or art of parody"—says Mr. Arthur Symons. Sir Owen Seaman is reported as saying that "reverence might seem a strange

quality to require of a parodist: yet it was an instinct of the best of them." The Authors of the *Rejected Addresses* were surprised and gratified by the good-will shown to them by the members of the genus irritable whom they had "most audaciously burlesqued"; and though it is obvious that they undertook their pleasant task unhampered by any conscious weight of reverence for their victims, still they were glad that they had not hurt anybody's feelings; while Sir Theodore Martin was anxious to explain that the *Bon Gaultier Ballads* were a form of hero-worship. There is, too, J. K. Stephen's *The Parodist's Apology*:—

> If I've dared to laugh at you, Robert Browning,
> 'Tis with eyes that with you have often wept:
> You have oftener left me smiling and frowning,
> Than any beside, one bard except.

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch has made the same remark about parody, and has explained it by the following argument. Parody is concerned with "Poetry and preferably great

Poetry" ; parody must therefore be " delicate ground, off which the profane and vulgar should be carefully warned." It " plays with the gods " : and as the religious man or the devout lover may indulge in a smile at this or that foible of his religion or of his mistress, so the parodist knows unerringly " how far to go." " He must be friends with the gods, and worthy of their company, before taking these pleasant liberties with them." This argument is qualified by a footnote. " There are of course, false gods in Poetry. But parodies of these directly expose their falsity, while parodies of true poetry subtly pay homage to its truth. Moreover, we may say generally that in parody, as elsewhere, exposure of the false (though useful and necessary) ranks below illustration of the true."

Too much stress is laid upon the casual connection between good taste and familiarity with the best authors. There *is* a casual connection, indeed ; for the man who has good taste will therefore know good poetry when he reads it,

and will naturally pursue his acquaintance with the poet. But it does not follow from this that he will parody that poet. He will not, unless he is a parodist; and to be a parodist does not involve either having good taste or having an intimate knowledge of any particular kind of poetry. There are many instances of extremely vulgar parodies of good poetry, and of extremely brilliant parodies of bad poetry. It must be within the knowledge of Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch that the vulgar man *does* make vulgar jokes about his wife and the profane man about his religion, however desirable it may be that these liberties should only be taken by the devout.

Would it not, however, be truer to say that the parodist as a rule is a man with literary tastes; that he is inclined to parody only authors with whose work and style he is well acquainted; and that he is not likely to take the trouble to master the style of an author from whose work he derives no pleasure? These probabilities tend to produce the best parodies; but different

circumstances may produce a very good parody. For instance, a man with critical taste and a knack of seizing salient characteristics might be irritated by the popularity of a poet, whom he regarded as a false god; a cursory study of that poet's work might enable him to write a parody which would hold the poet up to ridicule. It cannot be reasonably maintained that Henry Carey's *Namby Pamby* is not an excellent parody of a poet whom he certainly did not admire or revere; nor were the Della Cruscans of necessity an object of respect to Southey or to Horace Smith, any more than the author of Festus was admired by Andrew Lang.

It is highly desirable that the parodist should be a man of taste and discretion, and should know instinctively "how far to go." He would not burlesque a sacred poem, Sir Owen Seaman declares, "or a work of deep and moving sentiment, such as Tennyson's *Crossing the Bar*, though such might seem to offer themselves an easy prey"; while Mr. Wilfrid Blair, one of the cleverest of the younger parodists, claims credit

for having resisted the temptation of *Kubla Khan*. Thus many poets who are not fair game, would be easy to parody ; and many more who *are* fair game, offer considerable difficulties to the sportsman. The harder the shot, the greater the triumph if it succeeds ; and in considering various parodies it is well to take this factor into the reckoning. For instance, it is clear that such poets as Southey, Wordsworth, Tennyson (especially the *Idylls of the King*), Browning, Swinburne, Kipling, Masefield, are large targets ; while Shakespeare, Shelley, Burns, Matthew Arnold, Clough, and the present Laureate, for instance, need a great deal of stalking. This is not for want of style or individuality, but for want of salient seizable characteristics. And the beauty of the really great parody lies in the intimacy of its attack ; it is not content with clutching at the excrescences, it strikes at the very heart.

There is a story of some dons who were discussing over their port a colleague who was not present ; and they were trying to analyse him,

his looks, his manner, his character. They were all clever men, being dons; and they had all known the man well for years. But they could come to no satisfactory conclusions about him, till at last one of them, who had been silent, rose to his feet, and said, "I will show you what he is like"; and he dropped his arms and curved them slightly, and bent his legs too and thrust his head forward; and without exaggerating the attitude he suggested all the simian characteristics. It was a perfect illumination, far more convincing than any amount of analysis or discussion.

That is what the best parodies do. They are "a department of pure criticism." And more than this—they have a life and an interest apart from their models, as light verse, or as humorous prose. So much depends upon the reader's knowledge of the model, that the parodist is wise if he endeavours to write something which has an intrinsic value. Even so, no doubt a mass of very good stuff has been submerged with the ephemeral object of attack; and still more

has lived only in the pages of periodicals, read to-day and burned to-morrow. Industry, in the shape of Mr. Walter Hamilton, rescued some thousands of parodies from oblivion, and buried them again. For it is reasonable to suppose that few people read the six volumes of *Parodies of the Works of English and American Authors*, which were published nearly thirty years ago. They throw an appalling and sinister light upon the banality of parodists, containing, as they do, such items as eighty-four parodies of Gray's *Elegy*, fifty-four of "To be or not to be," thirty-two of the Ancient Mariner, and twenty-two of "Ye Mariners of England,"

> A thing imagination boggles at:
> And might, odds-bobs, sir! in judicious hands
> Extend from here to Mesopotamy.

This is not the spirit in which Parody should be preserved. The anthologists have done better; and in *A Parody Anthology* (Carolyn Wells, 1904), *A Book of Parodies* (Arthur

Symons, 1908), *Parodies and Imitations* (Stanley Adam and Bernard White, 1912), and *A Century of Parody and Imitation* (Walter Jerrold and R. M. Leonard, 1913), may be found all, or nearly all, that is of first-rate importance. Messrs. Adam and White have an interesting section of the most recent parodists, including Mr. Wilfrid Blair, Mr. E. G. V. Knox, and Mr. " Rhode Knight."

The simplest form of parody is the verbal, which gains its ludicrous effect by taking a well-known poem and altering a word here and a line there so as to make a different sense without mutilating the original form. For instance, when Regent's Park was opened, Katharine Fanshawe made havoc of Pope's

> Here shall the spring her earliest sweets bestow,
> Here the first roses of the year shall blow,

by the simple expedient of substituting "coughs" for "sweets," and "noses " for "roses." Or, to give a new and less puerile example, there is a certain felicity in Mr. Stodart-Walker's

My heart leaps up when I behold
A mince pie on the table;
So was it when my youth *began,*
So is it now I am a man,
So be it when I shall grow old
If I am able.
The Boy eats faster than *the Man,*
And I could wish my meals *to be*
Bound each to each by rich mince-*piety.*

The italics mark how much of Wordsworth's original poem remains. But in such a meticulous task as this the parodist must be very wary; he is juggling with knives, and must not expect sympathy if a false throw brings retribution. In his *Moxford Book of Verse* Mr. Stodart-Walker attempted the audacious task of parodying nearly a hundred poems, nearly seventy poets; and, to judge by the preface and the envoy, was able to regard his achievement with complacency—but this is not the feeling with which the reader is likely to lay down the volume. From the critical standpoint it is useful, because it contains in its pages excellent specimens of

all the pitfalls into which the verbal parodist can stumble, as, for instance, in his treatment of Mr. Yeats' best-known poem :—

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made ;
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

This is the parody :—

I will arise and go now, and go to Innes free,
And a small table order, with beer in bottles laid ;
Nine " beanos " will I have there, a hat for the busy bee,
And drink alone in the b.y. glade.

It would be almost priggish to deny a smile to " nine beanos " ; for Yeats' " nine bean-rows " is fair game ; but the fibre of the whole parody is so coarse that it borders upon the irreverent. Throughout, you are conscious of

sense being flogged into its stable, of fun being squeezed out at all hazards, of beauty being vandalized. But not so is Poetry injured; it is the juggler who is cut; it is the parody which is banal. It has the misfortune to be about drinking, and bibulous poems are seldom interesting or amusing. It is not even a coherent exposition of any aspect of the glories of deep-drinking; it is maudlin and disjointed as the ruminations of a mere bar-crawler. "Nine beanos" is admittedly a shrewd hit; but where is the sense of "a hat for the busy bee," or the humour of the "b.y. glade"? The second and third stanzas are dreary and draggle-tailed beyond the endurance, you would think, of any author; and Mr. Stodart-Walker is notable among verbal parodists for the frequency with which he fails to maintain the liveliness of his first few lines. In many instances he is happy, ingenious, and witty; but he will always follow a good joke into a morass of inanities.

The verbal parodist either chooses a poem

which in style or metre suits a subject about which he is anxious to write humorously; or more commonly he chooses a subject which is suggested by a particular poem which he is anxious to burlesque. Thus J. K. Stephen, knowing well the circumstances in which Mr. Joynes, an Eton master, had recently imperilled his position by his active Nationalist sympathies, may have been led to tell the story in his *Ode on a Retrospect of Eton College*, by the inspiration of

> They snatched a fearful Joynes.

In this parody, as in the equally notable *Heathen Parsee*, it is worth while to notice at once that the best parodists, like the best translators, refuse to be hampered and enslaved by their originals. Hilton's first stanza is almost the same as Bret Harte's; the parody and the original catch sight of each other from time to time up to the supreme "palms-and-dates" triumph; but neither Hilton nor Stephen will spoil their pace in order to follow in each foot-

step of the forerunner. This is characteristic of the master parodists.

For closer adherence to model we must look to such writers as Horace Twiss or Phœbe Cary, both very clever and amusing. In his political parodies Twiss displayed a wide range of ability, and his *Patriot's Progress* is a *tour de force*; but he lacks lightness of touch, and the whimsical turn of phrase which gives a more precious flavour than mere imitation can give. Miss Cary had that whimsicality.

> The day is done and darkness
> From the wing of night is loosed,
> As a feather is wafted downward
> From a chicken going to roost,

is a good-humoured skit on Longfellow's—

> The day is done and the darkness
> Falls from the wing of Night,
> As a feather is wafted downward
> From an eagle in his flight,

with just a touch of gentle malice to enrich it.

The *pari passu* parodist has, in the main,

two weapons of attack, the antithesis and assonance. The antithesis is an easy effect. Ben Jonson retorted to Wither's—

> Shall I, wasting in despair,
> Die because a woman's fair ?

by—

> Shall I mine affections slack
> 'Cause I see a woman's black ?

and so on through five stanzas of puerile contradictions. Thackeray's " Cabbages ! bright green cabbages ! " is a similarly poor skit on L. E. L.'s " Violets ! deep blue violets ! " It is a species of nagging rather than of burlesque. H. S. Leigh is inclined to use it in his capital *Chateaux d'Espagne,* modelled on *The Raven.* " Eagerly I wished the morrow," said Poe. " Dreadfully I feared the morrow," echoed Leigh.

Assonance is a more important effect, because it is capable of very subtle handling. At its baldest it is of the " Call no man happy till he is fed," " Nothing succeeds like excess " order.

Twiss used it lavishly. Calverley's parody of the Brook is famous for it.

I come from haunts of coot and tern,
I make a sudden sally,
And sparkle out among the fern
To bicker down a valley,

is turned into—

I deal in every ware in turn,
I've rings for budding Sally
That sparkle like those eyes of her'n;
I've liquor for the valet.

Similarly—

I steal by lawns and grassy plots,
I slide by hazel covers;
I move the sweet forget-me-nots
That grow for happy lovers,

is turned into—

I steal from th' parson's strawberry-plots,
I hide by the squire's covers;
I teach the sweet young housemaids what's
The art of trapping lovers.

This is assonance most deftly used, where assonance is akin to punning. The same happy mood inspired Rossetti to parody Tennyson's *The Kraken.*

Below the thunders of the upper deep;
Far, far beneath in the abysmal sea,
His ancient, dreamless, uninvaded sleep
The kraken sleepeth: faintest sunlights flee
About his shadowy sides; above him swell
Huge sponges of millennial growth and height;
And far away into the sickly light,
From many a wondrous grot and secret cell
Unnumber'd and enormous polypi
Winnow with giant arms the slumbering green.
There hath he lain for ages and will lie
Battening upon huge sea-worms in his sleep,
Until the latter fire shall heat the deep;
Then once by man and angels to be seen,
In roaring he shall rise and on the surface die.

Rossetti's boisterous humour evolved this :—

Getting his pictures, like his supper, cheap,
Far, far away in Belfast by the Sea,
His watchful, one-eyed, uninvaded sleep,
MacCracken sleepeth. While the P.R.B.

Must keep the shady side, he walks a swell
Through spungings of perennial growth and height,
And far away, in Belfast out of sight,
By many an open " do " and secret sell
Fresh daubers he makes swift to scarify
And fleece with pliant shears the slumbering " green."
There he has lied, though aged, and will lie
Fattening on ill-got pictures in his sleep,
Till some Pre-Raphaelite prove for him too deep.
Then once by Hunt and Ruskin to be seen,
Insolvent he will turn, and in the Queen's Bench die.

In this, as in his parody *The Brothers*, Rossetti is careful to keep as far as possible the same rhymes as the original ; and this may be noted as a point upon which verbal parodists are apt to insist. Barham's " Not a *sous* had he got—not a guinea or note," has almost the same rhymes as Wolfe's poem throughout.

Verbal parody is excellent practice for young wits that need sharpening, and is a handy weapon for the impromptu ; but it postulates no great knowledge of the author parodied, nor any admiration. It ranks with double acrostics, jig-saw puzzles, cricket-nets, and captive golf-balls.

Parody

It is an astonishing fact that in at least three anthologies J. K. Stephen's sonnet "Two Voices are there" is included and called a parody of Wordsworth, for no better reason than that the first line is practically the same as that of Wordsworth's "Thought of a Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland," and the sextet has the same arrangement of rhymes, A A B C C B. Delightful as it is, the sonnet was never intended to parody either a particular poem or the general style of the poet. Mr. Arthur Symons not only fell into this mistake, but committed the solecism of praising Stephen's passage "for Greek Iambics" as a discreet parody of W. S. Landor! As it is the best parody of Shakespeare's style that has yet been printed, it may be quoted at length :—

Pe. Not so, my liege, for even now the town
Splits with sedition, and the incensed mob
Rush hither roaring.

Olc. Let them roar their fill,
Bluster and bellow till the enormous wings
Of gusty Boreas flap with less ado.

Ask they my treacherous nephew's wretched life,
As if that order were a thing of nought
Which I did publish ? Let them beg or threaten,
I'll not regard them. Oh my trusty friend,
There is no rock defies the elements,
With half the constancy that kinglike men
Shut up their breasts against such routs as these
Pe. O my most valiant lord, I feel 'tis so,
Permit me to advance against the foe.

(*Olcis and Terranea*, Act IV, Sc. iii.)

Critics may cavil at the word " permit," but the rest is amazingly Shakespearean. Compare it with Twiss's political Seven Ages, and at once the superiority of the stylistic over the verbal parody is seen. The parodist of style must know his author well, and, unless he is deliberately out for blood, will be found in a genial mood mocking one whom he respects without either the malice or the callousness of the verbal parodist. He has to put himself into the mood and mind of his author, to use metre and mannerism with just that delicacy of touch which will win a chuckle of appreciation, not a roar of

laughter. Could anything be better in its way than Andrew Lang's translation of "Oh, no, we never mention her," into the "very affecting, mouldy and unwholesome" style of the Rossetti school?

> Love spake to me and said:
> "O lips, be mute;
> Let that one name be dead,
> That memory flown and fled,
> Untouched that lute!
> Go forth," said Love, "with willow in thy hand,
> And in thy hair
> Dead blossoms wear,
> Blown from the sunless land."

And so on. There is a perfect seriousness in this; the lips of the jester never relax even into the smile, much less into the broad grin which several of the most accomplished parodists cannot resist. It would be too much to say that every jester should keep a straight face; there is certainly a charm in the man who laughs at his own jokes. But the distinction is important; and where the parodist avails himself deliberately of bathos,

he raises a laugh at the expense of his own craftsmanship.

John Phillips's *Splendid Shilling* is a humorous poem written by a man who was imbued with Milton's rhythm and vocabulary. J. K. Stephen and Andrew Lang (in the poem quoted above) wrote the most polished parodies of all; Calverley, Seaman and others who are admitted masters, allow burlesque and frank fooling a share in the effect. Calverley "poked fun" at his friend Miss Ingelow; he wrote with genuine resentment of Browning's style in the Ring and the Book; but even in the *Cock and the Bull* he hardly keeps up the mask in front of his face to the end.

> You see the trick on't though, and can yourself
> Continue the discourse *ad libitum*.

In *Lovers and a Reflection* and the *Ballad* he is the amiable buffoon. Sir Owen Seaman hardly ever pretends that what he writes might have been written by his victim; he does not emulate Goldsmith, whose parody on Swift was

actually included by Sir Walter Scott in his edition of Swift. His point of view is different ; when he ridicules, he makes no secret of it. The humour of the Alfred Austen Ode is rollicking enough ; but a subtler parodist would not have written :—

Just now, withal (that's twice we've said " withal ").

Perhaps it is his full-blooded brilliance that most of all characterises Sir Owen Seaman's work—he writes for the delectation of the many, not the charming of the few ; nothing is too absurd or too ingenious for him ; and whereas Browning declared that if he had found Bayard Taylor's imitations in a volume of his own poems he would have believed that he actually wrote them, Sir Owen Seaman was " never so complimented " as when Henley said that he must have written *Out of the large-limbed night* himself—when he was drunk.

The occasional, the probably impromptu, parody has the best chance of success ; but it

is where a sustained and deliberate effort is planned that the versatility and mimicry and humour of the parodist are most severely tested. There are several of these collective series, in which writers have written a number of parodies either round a subject—as in Hawkins Browne's *Pipe of Tobacco* (1768)—or round an event, as in the *Rejected Addresses* or the *Battle of the Bays*. In this way Mr. H. C. Bunner wrote *Home, Sweet Home, with Variations*, by Swinburne, Bret Harte, Austin Dobson, Goldsmith, Pope, and Walt Whitman; Mr. C. A. Vince told the story of Jack and Jill in the Cornhill for January, 1914, in no less than a dozen different styles; similarly the Reverend Anthony C. Deane wrote various nursery rhymes in the styles of various poets. James Hogg in his *Poetic Mirror*, Horace Twiss in his *Posthumous Parodies of the Poets*, and Bayard Taylor in his *Diversions of the Echo Club* indulged in groups of parodies, but not groups that had a definite central idea. Swinburne's *Heptalogia*, Sir Frederick Pollock's *Leading Cases*, St. John

Hankin's *Lost Masterpieces*, Lang's *Jubilee Odes by Bards that were Silent*, and Max Beerbohm's *Christmas Garland* should also be mentioned, while the *Moxford Book of Verse* is the most comprehensive effort of its kind that has been published. But in all these groups of parodies, even in the *Rejected Addresses*, allowances are half-unconsciously made on account of the bigness of the undertaking ; the method in itself is attractive, and a tribute is paid to the courage as well as to the ingenuity of the parodist.

So, too, it is with James Hogg's *Poetic Mirror*, published four years after the *Rejected Addresses* and rivalling them in sustained brilliance and in length. The parodies are so long that weak lines and passages are easily overlooked ; the humour is less on the surface, the imitation of style betrays a closer acquaintance with the originals than can be said of the work of James and Horace Smith. Hogg was nearly forty-five when he wrote them, whereas the Smiths were about ten years younger, and it is worth while

to draw attention to ages and to emphasize the rather obvious fact that the best parodies can be, and mostly are, written after the wild oats have been garnered. The colts do not have the field entirely to themselves. Swinburne was forty-three when the *Nephelidia* were published, and Bayard Taylor forty-five when his *Echo Club* appeared in the Atlantic Monthly.

The volume of Diversions contains some forty parodies of contemporary poets, which are introduced into the conversation of four shrewd critics and parodists. Unfortunately several of the poets most ably travestied are not by any means well known on this side of the Atlantic; but the four Browning parodies—especially "Angelo orders his dinner"—the Keats, Rossetti, Morris, Emerson, Longfellow, and Jean Ingelow parodies are worth a place in any English anthology. Bayard Taylor, who published the book anonymously, had the pleasure of criticizing and parodying himself, and evidently did it with some relish. This self-parody is not by any means uncommon;

Thackeray, Coleridge, Hogg, Lamb, and Swinburne tried their hands at giving themselves away; while Horace Smith, it will be remembered, included his own *Address without a Phœnix* among the *Rejected Addresses*. Swinburne's *Nephelidia* has often been praised; but it is far inferior to many other parodies of his work.

Bayard Taylor, though his execution is not faultless, deserves high honour because he endeavoured to use parody for what Sir Owen Seaman declared to be its highest function, "a department of pure criticism"; and here we come upon a third division of parody. We have had word-rendering and form-rendering. To these we may add sense-rendering. If it is possible to emphasize the peculiarities of a poet's style by means of parody, it should also be possible to emphasize the peculiarities of his point of view. To a large degree the two things go together: a good style-parody must present its subject in the manner in which the

model would have treated it, and it is therefore a parody of sense as well as of form. But an instance will clearly show the difference. Take the metre of *Dolores* as used by Mortimer Collins in his *Salad* :—

O cool in the summer is salad
  And warm in the winter is love;
And a poet shall sing you a ballad
  Delicious thereon and thereof,
A singer am I, if no sinner,
  My Muse has a marvellous wing,
And I willingly worship at dinner
  The Sirens of Spring.

Take endive . . . like love it is bitter;
  Take beet . . . like love it is red;
Crisp leaf of the lettuce shall glitter,
  And cress from the rivulet's bed;
Anchovis foam-born, like the Lady
  Whose beauty has maddened this bard;
And olives, from groves that are shady;
  And eggs—boil 'em hard.

There is nothing subtle in this but it is a

nimble piece of writing, with an echo of Swinburne in it and some gentle digs in his ribs. But contrast with it Hilton's blow in the face, his immortal *Octopus*. It is a stinging criticism of the whole of Swinburne. There is not space to quote more than the last two stanzas :—

O breast that 'twere rapture to writhe on !
  O arms 'twere delicious to feel
Clinging close with the crush of the Python,
  When she maketh her murderous meal !
In thy eightfold embraces enfolden,
  Let our empty existence escape ;
Give us death that is glorious and golden,
  Crushed out of all shape !

Ah ! thy red lips, lascivious and luscious,
  With death in their amorous kiss !
Cling round us, and clasp us, and crush us,
  With bitings of agonized bliss ;
We are sick with the poison of pleasure,
  Dispense us the potion of pain ;
Ope thy mouth to its uttermost measure
  And bite us again !

It would hardly be an exaggeration to call this the supreme parody in verse. In metre, in style, in sense it is modelled upon Swinburne ; it is witty, and yet it is an almost savage criticism.

There is perhaps only one other verse-parody which can dispute the laurels with this of Hilton's ; and it has been called by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch " the perfection of parody." It is Stephen's *Poetic Lament on the Insufficiency of Steam Locomotion in the Lake District.* Not only does it imitate, with amazing fidelity, the style and vocabulary of Wordsworth ; even on this account alone it would rank high ; but—to quote Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch—" with almost diabolical cunning Stephen has seized on the subject that of all others would have engaged Wordsworth ; has turned it upside down ; and has presented the poet uttering to us in his own authentic words precisely the last sentiments his admirers would expect him to utter."

Hilton's was the easier, the more telling per-

formance, his malice more boisterous, his pen dipped in acid; and if subtlety were the criterion, Stephen must be acknowledged to be his superior. But when we consider the whole range of English verse-parody, we are inclined to put the Wordsworth in a class by itself and the Octopus at the head of the throng.

Many critics have said, as Stephen foretold :—

> Of C. S. C. this gentle art he learned,

and it is now the fashion, as Mr. Carrick has said, for them to quote their " one pet formula of praise " :—

> This work recalls the cleverness
> Of C. S. C. and J. K. S.

The formula has reference, of course, to light verse in general, rather than to parody; but if in the domain of parody the *Rejected Addresses* mark the beginning of a new dynasty, Calverley undoubtedly renewed its glories. Stephen, Quiller-Couch, Hilton, Seaman and the rest were inspired by him more than by

the Brothers Smith. And yet parody, with most of them, was only a by-product of their literary output; we do not find a distinction between professionals and amateurs; all the best parodists were amateurs, writing for the fun of the thing. Even Calverley's parodies take up only very few of the five hundred pages of his collected works; and precious as they are, brilliant and polished, he tossed them aside as they came to the surface of his mind, and dug deeper into the classics that he loved. It was primarily his love of the classics, his appreciation of clear language, his mastery of exotic metres, which made him mock amiably at the mossiness of Miss Ingelow, which irritated him in the slipshod garrulity of *The Ring and the Book*, and which gave him the power to hit off their weaknesses with so nimble a flick of the wrist. Ease and gracefulness are characteristic of all his work, as of Stephen's; but Calverley had immense strength and vigour of intellect, "driving force," as they say. He was in a way like Cinquevalli, before whose dexterity Mr.

Lucas finds himself capable only of murmuring, "Oh, you beauty! you beauty!"

It is not quite the same with Stephen. The wit is not so academic, the sentiment not so cool. His parodies are often exercises, his touch not always sure. The Shakespeare, the Wordsworth, the second Browning (birthdays), perhaps the second Myers, are masterly; the rest of the dozen are no better than the work of many other young men; even the Walt Whitman, delicious as it is, is not such a good parody as, for instance, Mr. Raper's *The Innings*, which was written five years earlier; in fact, it is not a parody at all.

A hopeless task, this pitting of parody against parody; there are not so many of them that we need discriminate between this and that, on the score of success. A great deal must depend upon the reader, who is able to appreciate one parody more than another and whose taste may not coincide with that of the shrewdest parodist. To parody a poem of which no one has ever heard is to court a cold reception; to mock a

poet whom the world has learned to regard with pity or indifference is like drawing attention to the blemishes in a face that no one has ever admired ; and since in any generation it is not easy to predict even relative immortality for more than two or three contemporary poets, Sir Owen Seaman has with reason pointed out that the parodist should amuse and delight the reader, even when he is unfamiliar with the work upon which the parody is modelled. This Calverley did, and this Seaman himself has done pre-eminently. There is hardly a poem among all the parodies that he has written which does not amuse and delight ; even those of John Davidson, Sir Lewis Morris, Sir Edwin Arnold, and William Watson need no scrupulous knowledge of the models on the part of the reader ; they carry their own weight, and being lively and rich with an exuberance of good-humoured burlesque and drollery they are apt to blind us to the real criticism that they contain. *The Battle of the Bays* and *In Cap and Bells* are both compact of the best sort of fun, bubbling up

as if it were no trouble to dress up in someone else's clothes and to caper about the room. But the admirers of O. S. will always treasure *Borrowed Plumes* even more devotedly, finding in these prose-parodies the freest expression of that riotous ingenuity and calculated fooling which have won the editor of *Punch* his enviable position among literary craftsmen. Like all work written for weekly papers, these parodies have run the risk of being submerged with the ephemeral subjects upon which they are comments ; there is a loud echo of the Boer war in them, and some of the novels parodied have never achieved the sevenpenny edition. But how good they are, nearly all of them. The brilliant idea of sending Mrs. Glyn's Elizabeth to stay with that other Elizabeth in her German Garden is triumphantly carried out. John Oliver Hobbs, Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler, Mrs. Humphry Ward, Miss Corelli, Mrs. Meynell—it is surely an achievement to have burlesqued five contemporary authoresses with such distinction that no sentence could be

transferred from one to the other without detection. What could be better than this, of Maurice Hewlett :—

" Now, as the city waxed monstrous fruitful, but the highways abode as they were, save for yawning breaches in the floor thereof very unseasonable, you will collect that the press of passengers, horse and foot, grew like to a hustle of pilchards pell-mell in a Brittany drag-net. And the town-watch gave admonishment, crying ' Passavant ! passavant ! ' or ' Halte-là ! ' as the case demanded. And the driver of the all-folks-wain would turn to his rearguard and 'Lord Mayor ha' mercy,' he would say, ' 'tis a mazy faring ! ' And, ' Ay, mate, a bit thick ! ' his fellow ; and so would troll a snatch of *Adhæsi pavimento*."

Or this, of Meredith :—

" A next-weeker for procrastination, there was Aeacus in his eye for the delays of others. Chatham-and-Dover with himself, he was Time-and-Tide for the rest."

Or this, of Maeterlinck's philosophy :—

" The spectacle of a plain, four-footed cow sitting alone with her destiny, chewing the cud and altogether unconscious of the laws of the Equinox, has in it I know not what of tragic that moves me more than the crash of conflicting mastodons."

This is fine fooling, friendly and yet illuminating. There is no sting in it, but much honest laughter, as may be said equally of Mr. Chevalier's sermon Mary and her Lamb.

It is something of a relief to turn from parodies in verse to these parodies in prose ; the tedious comparison of texts in search of verbal ingenuities gives place to a broader appreciation of stylistic analogies ; and the prose-parodist is not lured to failure by reason of too close an affinity to his victim. He is not tempted by the bait of the single line to pursue a burlesque to the bitter end, like a man who should be obliged to order a new suit that will match a brilliant

tie. He does not waste time in devising ludicrous assonances, or in urging a tolerable coherence of sense into predestined rhymes and metre. He takes the larger view and has a quicker eye for his author's gait and gestures than for the oddities of his dress, and will not be satisfied till he has probed his victim to the vitals.

This Sir Owen Seaman did in his *Borrowed Plumes;* and some of Mr. Barry Pain's skits on prose-writers are of equal rank for humour and shrewdness. Not easily does the picture of Marius and the omnibus fade from the memory. Much skill too has gone to the parodying of classical authors in academic magazines, wherein Herodotus describes the destruction of Didcot by fire, or Thucydides recounts the Trial Eights, or Aristotle writes of Golf or of Seeing People Off, or Socrates and Agymnasticus argue about cricket. These are exercises, as are also Andrew Lang's *Letters to Dead Authors*, and other works of this kind, of which it is no disparagement to say that they are nothing but the scribblings of scholars upon the blackboard when the

master's back is turned. Parody of the dead is static; you may indeed help to adjust the world's estimate of an author, but you will not help that author to see himself as the world sees him; and this you must do if you are going to cure him of his faults. Sir Owen Seaman declares that parody induced Stephen Phillips to modify his arbitrary methods of accentuation; and truly an author is more likely to heed the genial ridicule of the parodist than the laboured indictment of the professional critic. For this reason, if for no other—and several might be adduced—parodies of contemporaries must be considered the most important.

It is too early to say with confidence that Mr. Max Beerbohm's *Christmas Garland* contains the finest set of parodies that have ever emanated from one brain; but there are not a few critics who would endorse such an estimate. Certainly they are an advance upon *Borrowed Plumes*, for this reason, that the majority of Sir Owen Seaman's parodies in that volume are frankly skits upon actual works, whereas Mr.

Beerbohm set himself the task of making sixteen contemporary authors write about one subject, Christmas. Similarly one mimic might burlesque Sir Henry Irving in *The Bells*, Sir Herbert Tree in *Herod*, Sir John Hare in *Caste*, Mr. Cyril Maude in *Toddles*, and so on; while another might imitate the same actors all reciting "Mary had a little Lamb." It has been done, no doubt; and the success of the second mimic would be conditioned by two very heavy handicaps, the danger of not getting enough variety to sustain interest, and the difficulty of knowing exactly how, as a fact, each actor would recite the poem. The test of the whole imitation is whether it convinces without boring the audience. Mr. Beerbohm's triumph lies in the skill with which he has devised sixteen totally different aspects of Christmas, and in the conviction which he forces upon you that so and not otherwise would each author have written about Christmas. Not precisely so, of course; but so without the Maxiness.

It would not be safe to say that Sir Owen

Seaman could not have woven an equally priceless garland ; for where the two parodists have tried their hands at the same authors—Henry James, G. B. Shaw, Hewlett, and George Moore —there is no certain superiority in the later parodies. But it will be generally agreed that Mr. Beerbohm has been most successful where he has broken new ground, and has parodied authors who have seldom if ever been subjected to criticism of this kind. Criticism it is, undoubtedly, and of a most pungent quality ; revealing to the reader peculiarities of style and thought which could hardly be detected under a less searching light. Mr. Conrad's style, for instance, is universally admired ; he is said to write better English than any English novelist ; and yet there are very few critics who could lay their fingers on the phrases and turns of phrases which distinguish his style from that of other authors. But read this :—

" The roofs of the congested trees, writhing in some kind of agony private and eternal, made tenebrous and shifty silhouettes against the sky,

like shapes cut out of black paper by a maniac who pushes them with his thumb this way and that, irritably, on a concave surface of blue steel. Resin oozed unseen from the upper branches to the trunks swathed in creepers that clutched and interlocked with tendrils venomous, frantic and faint. . . ."

If you will pick up one of Conrad's earlier books you will soon come across that trick of the double epithet following its noun, and will notice that sinister veil which he contrives to throw over his similes and descriptions ; and will appreciate the Conradesque quality of the " with his thumb."

But *The Feast* (as the Conrad parody is called) is one of the less amusing and complete pieces *in itself*. You would not find it very entertaining if you had not read any Conrad ; and there is this limitation, too, in *P.C. X.* 36 (Kipling), *A Sequelula to " The Dynasts "* (Hardy), and *Fond Hearts Askew* (Hewlett). On the other hand, the parodies of the essayists, G. K. Chesterton,

Frank Harris, G. S. Street, Edmund Gosse, and Belloc, are full of good things that are only made better by the skilfulness of the imitations. The Belloc in particular is as readable in its absurdity as anything that the model ever wrote.

" . . . Now the door was Oak. It had been grown in the forest of Boulevoise, hewn in Barre-le-Neuf, seasoned in South Hoxton, hinged nowhere in particular, and panelled—and that most abominably well—in Arque, where the peasants sell their souls for skill in such handiwork." . . .

And here is Chesterton, demolishing the " damnable error " that Christmas comes but once a year.

" Spiritually, Christmas Day recurs exactly seven times a week. When we have frankly acknowledged this, and acted on this, we shall begin to realize the Day's mystical and terrific beauty. But it is only everyday things that reveal themselves to us in all their wonder and their splendour. A man who happens one day to

be knocked down by a motor-bus merely utters a curse and instructs his solicitor, but a man who has been knocked down by a motor-bus every day of the year will have begun to feel that he is taking part in an august and soul-stirring ritual." It must be admitted that parodying Mr. Chesterton is not unlike imitating Mr. George Graves—easy enough if you can once get the voice.

There are, however, in the *Christmas Garland*, three imitations (not counting the almost too good imitation of Mr. Arthur Benson, so good as to verge upon outrage) which are incontestable contributions to " pure criticism"; they set forth, with the utmost urbanity, the underlying absurdities of Mr. H. G. Wells, Mr. Galsworthy, and Mr. Arnold Bennett respectively. Of these, the Wells is the most conclusive, the Galsworthy the most polished, the Bennett the most amusing and ingenious. There is no space to deal adequately with them here ; the never-failing wit and droll irony, the satire so finely whetted that it cuts to the heart without leaving a scar

on the surface, the relentless logic with which each foible of the author is driven into the light, a laughing-stock for gods and men—these qualities in Mr. Beerbohm's work, which may be paralleled in his caricatures, seem to justify once and for all, the labours and errors through which parody has passed.

The temptation to linger, chuckling, over the *Christmas Garland* is proof enough that parody is apt to lose its charm with its youth. The freshness of the book, its survey of contemporary writers, gives it a pull over its predecessors; and it is curious to pick up *Borrowed Plumes*, the treasured bedside book of a dozen years ago, and to find a middle-aged flavour in it. It is as *démodé* as brown boots. In another twenty years Mr. Beerbohm's caricatures and parodies may have been dragged into obscurity by the weight of his victims, and a new generation of writers will bring with them their own jester. Even now there are young writers of note who invite the attention of parodists. Mr. D. H. Lawrence, Mr. Ezra Pound, Mrs.

Barclay would be easy marks; a subtler eye would be needed for Mr. Walpole, Mr. Cannan, or Mr. Compton Mackenzie; and there can be little doubt that the art and craft of parody is in a flourishing condition. The younger men—some of them may be sampled in the Adam and White anthology—have all done good work, and the danger lies rather in the absence of any very distinguished writers to imitate than in the ability of the parodists. Anyhow, we shall see.

It is significant of the twentieth century that it has produced no literary critic of genius, or even of outstanding ability. The reviewer of books, who has learned that the tests of his competence are a quick grasp of superficialities, a well-stocked memory within reach of his arm-chair, and a power of compressed utterance, is never likely to develop into a critic of any weight; and in the turmoil of cleverness that bewilders and irritates us, who is to guide the taste of an ever-increasing mob of readers, intent only on some new thing? In the Francis Thompson boom of last year it was a critic of

the older generation who gently but firmly asserted the poet's rightful place in the hierarchy, and upheld the dignity of his profession, when the other critics had all lost their heads. And if literature is to free itself from the shackles of the "short-notice" review and of the circulating library, it must find younger men who will be eager to win the confidence of the reading public and to criticize, according to the highest traditions of the art, in the spirit of Mr. Edmund Gosse.

That is one method—the courteous welcome to the true, the polite ejection of the false. But if we may judge by analogy, the stewards of literature can hardly make their voices heard unless they raise them to a shout of praise or of denunciation; and it is the babel of cat-calls that controls the meeting. It is a wonder that the speakers are heard at all.

If persuasive words fail and loud words fail, there is still laughter, there is still ridicule. And it may well be that, as this motley and boisterous century goes on, more and more the

sifting of the true from the false will be achieved by ridicule. For you will observe that everybody is very serious—about himself, and believes that great events are imminent, great changes, great rejuvenations, over which he shakes his head profoundly, feeling that he is destined to be a protagonist in them. A revival of poetry, a new lease of life for art, the amazing development of the novel, the new era of architecture, the new conquests of music—are not the self-believers in these things the broadest targets for ridicule? They are, indeed, targets; but whether the shafts will stick in them or will fall harmlessly to the ground depends upon the stuff of which they are really made; and *that* is what it is necessary to discover.

As a weapon in theological controversy Parody has lost its earlier prestige, and burlesques of sacred poems or sacred writings are no longer regarded as the ordinary means of peppering an opponent. But the Reverend R. A. Knox, in his "Absolute and Abitofhell, being a Satire in the Manner of Mr. John Dryden upon a

newly issu'd Work entitl'd *Foundations*," has used his powers of wit and raillery with the greatest success to combat Modernism and the seven authors of the attempt to answer

What we believ'd, or why believ'd at all?
The thing was canvass'd, and it seem'd past doubt
Much we adher'd to we could do without:
First, ADAM fell; then NOAH'S Ark was drown'd,
And SAMSON under close inspection bound;
For DANIEL'S Blood the Critick Lions roar'd,
And trembling Hands threw JONAH overboard.

He tells of the Magdalen divine,

Whose greasy Stomach, while it tried in vain
Recorded Miracles to entertain,
Eschewing, LUKE, JOHN, MATTHEW, and the rest,
Read MARK, but could not inwardly digest;

and of Og,

A man so broad, to some he seem'd to be
Not one, but all Mankind in Effigy:
Who, brisk in Term, a Whirlwind in the Long,
Did everything by turns, and nothing wrong;

and of Strato,

Himself believing, as believing went
In that wild Heyday of th' Establishment,
When suave Politeness, temp'ring bigot Zeal,
Corrected "I believe" to "One does feel."

Dryden supplies the idea and the style of these hundred and fifty lines of charming malice; but they are not written to the discredit, as it were, of the earlier poet. The petard is borrowed for the hoisting of a third party; and in so far as this is the case, the poem is no more a strict parody than Mr. Knox claims in his title. None the less, it proves that parody can be still put to use as a controversial weapon, the purpose being not so much to separate the true poetry from the false by the touchstone of ridicule, as to add point to a quite unpoetical criticism or quarrel by the ingenuity and allusiveness of parody. To a certain extent this is the method of Mrs. Jarley's Waxworks.

It is not unlikely, therefore, that ridicule, by its weapons of satire, parody, burlesque and

caricature, will tend to supplant the more sedate methods of criticism; and the present vogue of the Revue is only one of many signs which indicate that the public is more inclined to laugh at the doings of the world than to cry over them. If this is so, then parody may play a more important part in the history of literature than it has hitherto had a chance to play. It may become a craft which men will not leave behind them at the Universities, but which they will think worthy of practice even in their middle age. There may be an opening for journals in which the sole method of comment upon affairs and people of the day shall be by parody and caricature. There may be a time when the leather-strop upon which young men have sharpened their wits hitherto shall become a veritable scourge wherewith to rouse the world

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